



Energy Tips – Steam

Steam Tip Sheet #2 • March 2002



Insulation Optimization Software Available

The North American Insulation Manufacturers Association has developed a software package (3EPlus) that determines the optimum thickness for a wide variety of insulating materials. Outputs include the simple payback period, surface heat loss, and surface temperature for each specified insulation thickness. 3EPlus is available at no cost through the Information Clearinghouse.

Use Insulating Jackets

Removable insulating jackets are available for valves, flanges, steam traps, and other fittings. Remember that a 6-inch gate valve may have over 6 square feet of surface area from which to radiate heat.

Adapted from an EnergyTIPS fact sheet that was originally published by the Industrial Energy Extension Service of Georgia Tech. For additional information on industrial energy efficiency measures, contact the Industrial Technologies Clearinghouse at (800) 862-2086.

Insulate Steam Distribution and Condensate Return Lines

Uninsulated steam distribution and condensate return lines are a constant source of wasted energy. The table shows typical heat loss from uninsulated steam distribution lines. Insulation can typically reduce energy losses by 90% and help ensure proper steam pressure at plant equipment. Any surface over 120°F should be insulated, including boiler surfaces, steam and condensate return piping, and fittings.

Insulation frequently becomes damaged or is removed and never replaced during steam system repair. Damaged or wet insulation should be repaired or immediately replaced to avoid compromising the insulating value. Eliminate sources of moisture prior to insulation replacement. Causes of wet insulation include leaking valves, external pipe leaks, tube leaks, or leaks from adjacent equipment. After steam lines are insulated, changes in heat flows can influence other parts of the steam system.

Heat Loss per 100 feet of Uninsulated Steam Line

Distribution Line Diameter (inches)	Heat Loss per 100 feet of Uninsulated Steam Line (MMBtu/yr)			
	Steam Pressure (psig)			
	15	150	300	600
1	140	285	375	495
2	235	480	630	840
4	415	850	1,120	1,500
8	740	1,540	2,030	2,725
12	1,055	2,200	2,910	3,920

Based on horizontal steel pipe, 75°F ambient air, no wind velocity, and 8,760 operating hr/yr.

Example

In a plant where the value of steam is \$4.50/MMBtu, a survey of the steam system identified 1,120 feet of bare 1-inch diameter steam line, and 175 feet of bare 2-inch line both operating at 150 psig. An additional 250 feet of bare 4-inch diameter line operating at 15 psig was found. From the table, the quantity of heat lost per year is:

1-inch line: 1,120 feet x 285 MMBtu/yr per 100 ft = 3,192 MMBtu/yr

2-inch line: 175 feet x 480 MMBtu/yr per 100 ft = 840 MMBtu/yr

4-inch line: 250 feet x 415 MMBtu/yr per 100 ft = 1,037 MMBtu/yr

Total Heat Loss = 5,069 MMBtu/yr

The annual operating cost savings from installing 90% efficient insulation is:

$$0.90 \times \$4.50/\text{MMBtu} \times 5,069 \text{ MMBtu/yr} = \$20,530$$

Suggested Actions

Conduct a survey of your steam distribution and condensate return piping, install insulation, and start to save.

About DOE's Industrial Technologies Program

The Industrial Technologies Program, through partnerships with industry, government, and non-governmental organizations, develops and delivers advanced energy efficiency, renewable energy, and pollution prevention technologies for industrial applications. The Industrial Technologies Program is part of the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy.

The Industrial Technologies Program encourages industry-wide efforts to boost resource productivity through a strategy called Industries of the Future (IOF). IOF focuses on the following nine energy and resource intensive industries:

- Agriculture
- Aluminum
- Chemicals
- Forest Products
- Glass
- Metal Casting
- Mining
- Petroleum
- Steel

The Industrial Technologies Program and its BestPractices activities offer a wide variety of resources to industrial partners that cover motor, steam, compressed air, and process heating systems. For example, BestPractices software can help you decide whether to replace or rewind motors (MotorMaster+), assess the efficiency of pumping systems (PSAT), compressed air systems (AirMaster+), steam systems (Steam Scoping Tool), or determine optimal insulation thickness for pipes and pressure vessels (3E Plus). Training is available to help you or your staff learn how to use these software programs and learn more about industrial systems. Workshops are held around the country on topics such as "Capturing the Value of Steam Efficiency," "Fundamentals and Advanced Management of Compressed Air Systems," and "Motor System Management." Available technical publications range from case studies and tip sheets to sourcebooks and market assessments. The *Energy Matters* newsletter, for example, provides timely articles and information on comprehensive energy systems for industry. You can access these resources and more by visiting the BestPractices Web site at www.oit.doe.gov/bestpractices or by contacting the Industrial Technologies Clearinghouse at 800-862-2086 or via email at clearinghouse@ee.doe.gov.



BestPractices is part of the Industrial Technologies Program's Industries of the Future strategy, which helps the country's most energy-intensive industries improve their competitiveness. BestPractices brings together the best-available and emerging technologies and practices to help companies begin improving energy efficiency, environmental performance, and productivity right now.

BestPractices focuses on plant systems, where significant efficiency improvements and savings can be achieved. Industry gains easy access to near-term and long-term solutions for improving the performance of motor, steam, compressed air, and process heating systems. In addition, the Industrial Assessment Centers provide comprehensive industrial energy evaluations to small and medium-size manufacturers.

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U.S. Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585-0121

DOE/GO-102002-1504
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